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Press Statement

South Africa - Code of Conduct

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Fourth Community Analysis of National Reports on the
implementation of the Code of Conduct for European Community
Companies with subsidiaries in South Africa

July 1981 - June 1983

The Ten discussed the fourth Community analysis of national reports on the implementation of the Code of Conduct by European Community companies with subsidiaries in South Africa. They decided to transmit the analysis to the European Parliament. The reports cover periods from July 1981 to June 1983. In all, the responses of 224 companies employing 141,679 black workers are analysed.

Since the Code of Conduct was adopted in 1977 important developments have taken place in labour practice in South Africa. The racial features have been removed from parts of the legislation dealing with labour matters and freedom of association has been extended to all black workers. Accordingly the influence of registered and non-registered black trade unions has increased markedly. The growth of trade union activity in E.C. companies was a notable feature of the period under review and the Ten are pleased to note that E.C. companies again showed an increased willingness to recognise black unions. The Ten regard a conciliatory and encouraging attitude to unions by employers as important if progress is to be made towards the achievement of internationally accepted standards of industrial relations.

The Ten noted that there had been a slight fall in the percentage of workers paid above the level recommended in the Code of Conduct. This is apparently due to recession in the South African economy. However, they also noted that the lot of the lowest paid workers appeared to have improved, although there is still scope for persuading companies which have not yet done so to observe the guidelines recommended by the Code.

The Ten welcome the contribution which companies can make in redressing in part the inequities of the educational system in South Africa. They note that training and educational activities could be expanded and could enable black workers to occupy skilled positions which are, at present, being filled by importation of workers from abroad.

The three members of the Ten whose companies have most subsidiaries in South Africa have appointed attaches to their embassies in Pretoria who have specific responsibility for labour matters related to the Code of Conduct.